

US BUSINESSMAN LOSES NAME LIST

The San Diego Union, 16 July 71

Americans Reported in Viet Prisons

By ROGER SHOWLEY
UPI Wirephoto

A 40-year-old Vietnamese businessman, who arrived in the United States within the past two weeks, claimed yesterday to have seen 49 American prisoners held in Vietnamese jails after the Vietnam war ended.

Nguyen Phu Hung, who has just rented a house here for himself, his wife and 11 children, told the annual meeting of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia that three of the men died during the time he had access to the prisons from May 1973 to April 1977.

Speaking through an interpreter, Hung said he compiled a list of names of the prisoners but lost it to pirates as he was fleeing to Thailand this past February.

However, league officials said the list could have been copied by members of the underground resistance movement in Vietnam. They said they hope to obtain the names so they can be released.

Hung's account had not been given to U.S. government officials prior to yesterday's disclosure before 350 league delegates meeting at the U.S. Grant Hotel.

Frank Sieverts, representing the State Department at the meeting, promised to interview Hung and determine if this story is correct.

"I think we will follow up on this information and we are glad to have it brought to our attention here," Sieverts told the audience, some of whom boozed Sieverts because of reports that government officials have failed to interview all Vietnamese refugees about Americans who may still be in Vietnamese prisons.

"The treatment was not harsh. It was nice," Hung said, as translated at the podium by Ash.

During a lengthy question-and-answer session with reporters and delegations, Hung was asked why the men were still being held.

"I didn't care but the prison warden and he never told me," Hung replied.

"I would never have been able to set foot in the compound again," said other officials I talked to

said. "We're keeping the prisoners in exchange for aid for recompensation,

because the United States agreed to give us \$2 billion."

I think it was difficult for them to admit they were keeping the men alive."

Hung was referring to a post-war claim by the new Vietnamese government

that then-President Richard Nixon had agreed to give \$2 billion in aid once the war was over and POWs had been exchanged and MIAs had been accounted for.

The U.S. has so far refused to grant any aid, claiming

that the accounting of POWs and men missing in action

has been unsatisfactory.

Hung said the prisoners

were held in five different

prisons, including the former headquarters of the

U.S. Agency for International Development in Saigon.

Hung escaped on a fishing

boat to Thailand with his

family and moved to San

Diego because a nephew

lives here.

Ash said Hung was a

wealthy businessman in

Saigon and lost all his pos-

sessions when he escaped —

including a briefcase with

125 ounces of gold and the

list of the 49 prisoners.

In response to another

question, Hung said he

gathers from other sources

that there are between 100

and 150 Americans still

being held captive.

Before Hung spoke, Rep.

Bob Wilson, of the House

select committee on

intelligence, interrupted

the United Nations to ask

what it knows about American

comptrollers.

"It is the obligation of the

Congress — and its responsibil-

ity — to state the demand

of aid and insist that an in-

dependent audit be forwarded

to us," said Wilson, the rank-

ing Republican member of

the House Armed Services

Committee. "This kind of

accounting will never be done

until the U.S. government

is persuaded by our Ameri-

cian diplomatic delegation to

the U.N. to put ext-

reme political and economic

pressure on the Vietnamese

Communist regime.

"We have a duty to our

missing servicemen, to their

families and to the nation as

a whole not to allow them to

be used as pawns in a brutal

game of diplomacy."

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